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Navy & Marine Corps Medical News (MEDNEWS)
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This service distributes news and information to
Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees,
and retired Navy and Marine Corps families. Further
dissemination of this e-mail is encouraged.

Headlines this week include:

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MN97148. CNO Wants Sailors to Learn About TRICARE
Got TRICARE questions? The answer's out there.
Information about TRICARE, the military's new health
care plan, is available through a myriad of printed
materials, special briefings, videotapes, and one-on-one
counseling. Beneficiaries can get this information at
medical treatment facilities and through health benefits
advisors.

Where TRICARE is in operation, TRICARE Service Centers
are open to provide information about TRICARE and your
military health care benefit.

There are still three regions in the U.S. - Regions 1,
2 and 5 - that have yet to implement TRICARE, and for Navy
families who live there, as well for those in other regions
who haven't taken advantage of the TRICARE information
available, the program may still be confusing. The Chief of
Naval Operations wants to make sure they get "the word" on
how to access health care through TRICARE.

"The TRICARE system will be a good system once we get
it fully implemented," said ADM Jay L. Johnson in testimony
on Capitol Hill. "I met with the Surgeon General (of the

Navy, VADM Harold Koenig, MC) on that very subject to try to articulate what it (TRICARE) means, what the options are, and how it relates to them and their families. We're very much committed to doing that (getting information to the families)."

For those with Internet access, there's yet another way to get TRICARE information. The Department of Defense Health Affairs' homepage, located at www.ha.osd.mil, has TRICARE news and facts, and is also linked to other sites, including the TRICARE Support Office (formerly OCHAMPUS) and TRICARE regional offices.

TRICARE Region 1 includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia.

TRICARE Region 2 includes Virginia (except District of Columbia suburbs) and North Carolina

TRICARE Region 5 includes Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Michigan.

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MN97149. Reservists Improve Access, Save Money For Jacksonville

Jacksonville, FL - When patients talk, Naval Hospital (NH) Jacksonville and its Reservists listen.

When Reservists heard the hospital had a backlog of patients waiting for surgery, they coordinated their weekend drills so they'd be able to "operate" a same day surgery unit the first weekend of each month.

"The Reserve same day surgery unit performs approximately 15 surgical procedures each weekend in such specialties as plastic surgery, general surgery, orthopedics, GYN, and podiatry," said LT Linda Finnestad, NC, who is the active duty division officer for the same-day surgery unit. "The Reserves are great! They really expand the number of surgeries our doctors can perform and make it easier on our patients who may have (scheduling) conflicts during the week."

The Reservists who man the weekend surgery unit include Navy and Army anesthesiologists, nurses and corpsmen.

"They all combine to create a great pooling of expertise from different health delivery institutions all over Florida and parts of Georgia," said LCDR Chris Bernier, NC, the Reserve division officer of the unit.

In addition to providing convenience and more available care for patients and exceptional training for Reservists, there's another reason the weekend surgery units is so popular at NH Jacksonville - money. The hospital estimates it saves more than \$20,000 each weekend the Reservists drill in the same day surgery unit by performing surgeries that would otherwise be performed at other civilian hospitals and paid for by CHAMPUS.

By LCDR Karen Schaffer, NH Jacksonville

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MN97150. Surface Forces Kick Off "Green H" Award

The "green H" isn't a new superhero.

It's an award that recognizes the healthiest units in the Atlantic and Pacific surface fleets.

To enhance battle readiness by promoting health and fitness in Sailors in the Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, the two surface forces are co-sponsoring an annual Wellness Unit Award, nicknamed the "green H." The H stands for health.

Commands qualify for the green H based on the fitness of their Sailors and the health promotion activities they participate in, such as tobacco cessation, weight control, pregnancy awareness, injury prevention, and anger and stress management.

There are no limits to the number of ships that receive the award.

"If a ship meets or exceeds all the standards, then they can earn a green E," said HMCM Antonio C. Abad, with the Fleet Surgeon's office at Surface Force Pacific Fleet.

Ships receiving the Wellness Unit Award are entitled to paint a green "H" on their bridge wing.

"I'd feel like the Green H (award) would be an outstanding success if I could walk down the pier and see every ship there with a green H," said Abad.

The Pacific Surface Force will award its first green H in June 1997. The Atlantic Surface Force will present its first awards in 1998.

COMNAVSURFLANT Instruction 6100.2 and COMNAVSURFPAC Instruction 6100.1 provide more information.

By Jan Davis, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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MN97151. Navy Lab Recreates a 'Sound' Environment

Groton, CT - It's the stuff audiophiles dream about - a headset so perfect that you can close your eyes and hear the drummer in one location, the horn in a second and a guitar in a third.

Thanks to Dr. Thomas Buell and his team of researchers at the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory (NSMR) in Groton, that dream is real.

Through a sophisticated method of artificially creating auditory clues to locations, the lab has created the auditory equivalent of virtual reality, and not only can you tell the direction of the sound, but the distance and elevation based on the sound as well.

But this isn't just a gimmick for music aficionados - it's good news for submariners. If the researchers can recreate, exactly, the auditory environment that sensors are picking up outside a submarine, there is a better chance of screening out background noise and picking out a "contact" - an enemy submarine or surface ship.

Dr. Thomas Hanna, who heads NSMR's auditory department, said it's called the "cocktail effect." Stand in a crowded

room with many conversations, and you might not listen to any of them. But hear your name across the room, you tune in immediately.

"When auditory cues are coming from different directions, it's easier to sort them all out," said Hanna. It's like tape-recording someone talking - when you're listening to the person "live" you filter out the background noise because it's coming from different directions than the individual who is talking. When you listen to the tape later, it's harder to hear the individual who's talking since background sounds are mixed in.

Creating the sound precisely requires presenting the sound to each ear at different times, and at different intensities. That's the way you hear sounds in the environment - it takes a tiny amount of extra time for a sound on the left side of the body to reach the right ear, for instance. The brain is such a sophisticated processor it can discriminate the difference in time between two sounds up to 100,000th of a second.

"That is a huge capability," said Hanna. "Our challenge is to make use of it."

By Robert A. Hamilton, "The Day," Groton, CT

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MN97152. Bremerton Opens Pharmacy Drive-Thru

Bremerton, WA - Naval Hospital (NH) Bremerton will soon join the growing number of Navy medical facilities that have drive-thru pharmacies.

On Apr. 28, Bremerton will open its prescription refill pick-up service. It will be open seven days a week for customer convenience.

According to HM1 Alan White, a pharmacy technician at NH Bremerton, the drive-through facility is only for refills.

"All new prescriptions should be picked up in the main pharmacy in the hospital," he said.

CDR Monte Harris, MSC, head of pharmacy services, sees the refill pick-up service as another milestone for improved customer service at the hospital.

"This is just a continuation of projects we've already initiated," he said. In recent months, the pharmacy has opened six "customer-focused" windows that provide more privacy for patients when they are counseled about their medication.

Other Navy hospitals with drive-thru pharmacies are National Naval Medical Center Bethesda, MD, and Naval Hospital Jacksonville, FL. Naval Hospital Newport, RI, will open a drive thru in early summer.

By Judith A. Robertson, NH Bremerton

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MN97153. BUMED Directives Now on CD-ROM

Washington, DC - The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's (BUMED) regulations and directives are now on CD-ROM and are

ready for delivery.

The BUMED Directives CD-ROM is now being distributed to all ships and stations that have medical department personnel. Instead of a shelf with 20 manuals Navy medical personnel can carry the same amount of information on a fingertip.

The BUMED Directive's CD-ROM has information ranging from BUMED instructions to the Radiation Health Protection Manual to the Manual of Naval Preventive Medicine.

Putting BUMED's directives on CD offers many advantages.

"They're easy to store and easy to distribute, and are also durable. Each copy you print off is an original, so it will be clear, not like a copy that has been repeatedly copied," said Laura Frantz, head of BUMED's regulations and directives branch.

For more information about BUMED's directives on CD-ROM, call the regulations and directives branch at (202) 762-3250.

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MN97154. Unit Ensures Quicker Out For Some Boots

Great Lakes, IL - Military life is not for everyone. Boot camp is often the "sifting" site to determine if the young recruits have the "right stuff" to be Sailors.

To help recruits who find the life of a Sailor isn't for them return quickly to civilian life, Naval Hospital (NH) Great Lakes has set up the Ambulatory Mental Health Unit (AMHU). The unit brings its services to the recruits at the Recruit Training Command, rather than have the recruits come to the hospital.

"Our mission is to provide a mental health service for the recruits who have been diagnosed while awaiting separation from the Navy," said LCDR Dorothy Engler, NC, head of mental health nursing with the AMHU.

The majority of patients seen at the AMHU are diagnosed with mild and stable cases of an adjustment disorder - that is, the Navy lifestyle is not for them. These recruits are seen on an outpatient basis.

In the past, recruits waiting separation because of adjustment disorder would stay in the hospital for up to 21 days. Since the AMHU's inception, the average length has decreased by 76 percent to about three days.

The AMHU is staffed by three mental health nurses and one psychiatric technician with clinical supervision provided by a licensed clinical psychologist. The staff offers supportive counseling, life-skills workshops and recreational activities for those awaiting separation.

For individuals requiring additional services after separation nurses coordinate with family services for follow-up care in the community.

By Kimberly Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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MN97155. Operational Preventive Medicine Course Offered

Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit No. 5 (NEPMU5) will sponsor an Operational Preventive Medicine Course in San Diego, CA, from July 14-25.

The course is open to active duty and Reserve military and Public Health Service health care providers, E-7 and above.

The course will address public health concerns in operational settings, with an emphasis on planning and management of preventive medicine from pre-deployment to post-deployment. Topics such as epidemiology, field entomology, chemical and biological warfare, industrial hygiene during operational deployments, and pre-deployment planning will be discussed.

A three day field exercise will also be conducted.

The course is free; however, students are responsible for travel and lodging.

Registration deadline is June 6 and is limited to 25 people.

For registration information, contact the NEPMU5 training department at (619) 556-7086, DSN 526-7086 or e-mail htmlng@4dcomm.com.

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MN97156. TRICARE Question & Answer

Q. I just enrolled in TRICARE Prime. How can I obtain a member handbook?

A. In most regions, member handbooks are mailed out to beneficiaries when they enroll. If for some reason you didn't get a handbook, call the TRICARE toll-free information number in your region:

Region 12 - (800) 242-6788

Region 11 - (800) 982-0032

Region 9 & 10 - (800) 242-6788

Region 6 - (800) 406-2832

Region 3 & 4 - (800) 444-5445

Additional information on TRICARE is available on the Department of Defense Health Affairs Homepage on the World Wide Web at www.ha.osd.mil

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NM97157. Healthwatch: Protect Your Skin to Look Younger and Live Longer

We all are going to get older. But treat your skin right and you don't have to look it. To maintain an ageless look - protect yourself from the sun.

Two big reasons to shield the sun's rays are skin cancer and aging. Tanning rays from the sun and tanning booths give off doses of solar radiation that penetrate and damage the skin.

"A lot of what we think of as aging is actually sun damage," said LCDR Kurt K. Mueller, MC, chief resident of dermatology at National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD.

According to Mueller, avoiding outside activities

between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun is most intense would be an ideal to protect your skin, but it's not very realistic.

Wearing tightly knit clothing and wide brim hats, using umbrellas and sitting under shade trees also offer protection. As a matter of fact, a T-shirt can offer as much as five on the sun protection factor (SPF) chart.

The SPF system charts how many times longer it would take for the sun to get through to your skin when wearing a lotion. For example, the sunburn you would normally get in one hour would take 15 hours with an SPF 15 sunscreen.

Mueller recommends using 15 SPF for everyday use and 30 SPF or higher in direct sunlight for most of the day while at the pool or the beach.

Whether oceanfront or pool side, use waterproof or resistant sunscreens. Waterproof sunscreens retain a protective capacity up to 80 minutes even in water. Water resistant sunscreens retain a protective capacity up to 40 minutes even in water.

Sunscreens, sunblocks and lotions that are not waterproof or water resistant wash away quickly but may be appropriate for everyday protection from harmful rays. No matter which cover you use, reapply it often for continuous protection.

Sunscreens aren't just for grown ups. Evidence suggests wearing sunscreen every day during the first 18 years of life can reduce the risk of worst skin cancer by 78 percent. Wearing it throughout your entire life can reduce chances by 98 percent.

Sunscreen use isn't limited to those with fair skin either. Although, people with black or deep brown skin are less vulnerable because they naturally possess a SPF level of five, they should protect their skin also.

According to Mueller, whether you're old or young, whatever your race, whether you've used sun block and sun screen or not, it's important to check skin moles.

"If people see a mole that appears irregular or is changing, they should get it looked at early so if it is cancerous it can be treated," said Mueller.

Protect yourself from the sun and you'll be protected from skin cancer and looking old.

By Kimberly Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact Jan Davis, MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil, telephone 202/762-3223 (DSN 762-3223), or fax 202/762-3224.